

January 22, 2009

EXHIBIT 3  
DATE 1/22/09  
HB 248

**HB 248: Requiring an elector to declare political party affiliation**

My objections to this bill are so numerous; it is hard to know where to start. I'll speak to the major items.

Why is it necessary to change the term 'independent' to 'unaffiliated'? The prefix 'un' normally means 'not' something. Well, I am an independent voter, and proud of it. I vote the candidate that I feel can best represent me.

In section 7 of this bill, it is proposed to change 'unvoted ballots' to 'unused ballots'. To me, an 'unvoted ballot' is a party ballot that was given to a voter in a multi party primary (such as we currently have in Montana). The voter chose to participate in one party's primary and not to participate in the other. One ballot is voted, the other is not.

'Unused ballots' on the other hand indicate those that were not necessary due to the lack of voters. At least for me, the terms refer to very different circumstances.

Section 8 deals with items a prospective voter can produce for identification purposes when registering. As I understand it, Federal law states that a person be 18 years of age and a US citizen in order to register to vote. Section 13-2-206 of the current Montana code states "A person shall not be permitted to register until he attains United States citizenship". *Why is there no requirement in Section 8 to provide proof of age and US citizenship for registration?*

Section 9 allows certain individuals to opt out of having their addresses printed on voter registration lists and Section 11 deals with making names, addresses, and party affiliations available to the public. In the interest of privacy and to prevent possible identity theft, I think everyone should have the right to opt out of having their address information made public.

Section 17, subsection (2) states that "an elector who has declared a party affiliation shall cast votes on the ballot for the party...".

Section 25, subsection (4) says that if a voter is unaffiliated, he or she may not receive absentee party ballots. That, along with Section 17 (2) effectively removes all voters, like myself who vote a candidate, from a primary and gives control basically to two parties. This bill is nothing more than an effort to put the two major political parties in control of the election process.

As we have seen all too often recently, party wrangling and divisiveness have gotten in the way of forward progress and getting things done.

I realize I'm going out on a limb when I say that the best thing would be to abandon the party system, to have candidates run on their own merit, and vote as the people in their districts desire. We need to make the election process simpler, give control back to the will of the people, and rise above partisan politics.

For these reasons, I strenuously oppose this bill and hope you will vote against it.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

*Cindy Swank*

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